



Catechetical Resources for Respect Life Sunday – October 2, 2022

Catholics United to Protect and Support Women, Children, and Families

Junior High – Preparation for the Session

Overview for Catechists and Group Leaders

This year, the bishops of all twelve dioceses in California are united in their desire to protect and support vulnerable women, children, and families in our state, as they made clear in a [joint statement](#) published in January this year. At the same time, historic events have brought the theme of protection of human life in the womb to the forefront of our social and political landscape.

As we enter Respect Life Month, our bishops are calling on all Catholics to unite as one in support of women experiencing a difficult or unexpected pregnancy. For students in Junior High, this is a time to learn about making good life choices, grounded in a profound respect for human life and centered in the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as well as to hear the call to make the seemingly impossible possible by acting together in a spirit of loving kindness as instruments of God's merciful love.

This 60-minute catechetical session will explore these themes, connecting them to the readings for Respect Life Sunday and a call to participate in the merciful works of the parish or school. It will be important to **check in with your Parish Catechetical Leader/Director of Faith Formation before the session** to find out if there are any specific parish fundraising or service activities that the pastoral staff wants the early adolescents and their families to participate in during Respect Life Month, such as:

- Raise funds for rental assistance and motel voucher funds through [Catholic Charities](#)
- Donate items or raise funds for the local [pregnancy resource center](#) or maternity home
- Create a parish [MealTrain](#) for new moms
- Invite parishioners to join a list of volunteers who can drive a pregnant mom or mom with small kids to doctor's appointments
- Throw a baby shower for moms in your parish or through your local pregnancy center
- Start a [Walking with Moms in Need](#), [Gabriel Project](#), or [St. Vincent de Paul Conference](#) at your parish, or invite new people to join existing ministries

- Introduce your parish St. Vincent de Paul Council to the local pregnancy center
- Host a drive for items to donate to [foster youth](#)
- Raise funds for the [One Number | One Solution](#) outreach ministry

Catechists and group leaders should take time to **review the included “Background for Catechists and Group Leaders” articles** from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other ecclesial documents. While these articles will not necessarily be quoted from during the catechetical session, the leader might be called on to answer questions from the young participants. A solid understanding of Catholic teaching on the virtue of faith, the fruits of the Holy Spirit, mercy, solidarity, discernment and making good choices, the merit of good deeds, Christian holiness, the Christian vision for marriage and human sexuality, the dignity of human life, and our Christian duty of personal and communal care for the poor will prepare the leader to respond to the young people’s desire for deeper understanding, rooted in the Gospel.

Background for Catechists and Group Leaders

Articles from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1813 [On the theological virtues] The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. [See nn. 1814 to 1829 for more details about the theological virtues. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P66.HTM]

1814 [On the virtue of Christian faith] Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God." For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith." Living faith "work(s) through charity."

1816 The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks." Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."

1832 [On the fruits of the Holy Spirit] The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. the tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: "charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity."

1846 [On divine mercy] The Gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners. The angel announced to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." The same is true of the Eucharist, the sacrament of redemption: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

1939 [On human solidarity] The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of "friendship" or "social charity," is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood.

An error, "today abundantly widespread, is disregard for the law of human solidarity and charity, dictated and imposed both by our common origin and by the equality in rational nature of all men, whatever nation they belong to. This law is sealed by the sacrifice of redemption offered by Jesus Christ on the altar of the Cross to his heavenly Father, on behalf of sinful humanity."

2008 [On merit for our good deeds] The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace. the fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit.

2009 Filial adoption, in making us partakers by grace in the divine nature, can bestow true merit on us as a result of God's gratuitous justice. This is our right by grace, the full right of love, making us "co-heirs" with Christ and worthy of obtaining "the promised inheritance of eternal life." The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness. "Grace has gone before us; now we are given what is due.... Our merits are God's gifts."

2013 [On Christian holiness] "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity." All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

In order to reach this perfection, the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that . . . doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. Thus, the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints.

2443 [On love for the poor] God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay." It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence.

2446 St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity."

When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.

2447 The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding

the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.

Other ecclesial and papal documents

84. [On forming the moral conscience] In the same way, the catechetical task of educating the believer to the good life of the Gospel involves the Christian formation of the moral conscience, so that in every circumstance he may listen to the Father's will in order to discern, under the guidance of the Spirit and in harmony with the law of Christ (cf. Gal 6:2), the evil to be avoided and the good to be done and putting this into practice with diligent charity. This is why it is important to teach the believer to draw from the commandment of charity developed from the Decalogue (cf. Ex 20:1-17; Dt 5:6-21) and from the virtues, both human and Christian, guidelines for acting as Christians in the different areas of life. Not forgetting that the Lord came to give life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10), catechesis should know how to point out "the attractiveness and the ideal of a life of wisdom, self-fulfillment and enrichment" so as to make believers "joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shine forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel." (*Vatican, Directory for Catechesis*)

281. [On forming one's conscience] Here we see the importance of the formation of conscience, which allows discernment to grow in depth and in fidelity to God: "Forming our conscience is the work of a lifetime, in which we learn to cultivate the very sentiments of Jesus Christ, adopting the criteria behind his choices and the intentions behind his actions (cf. Phil 2:5)".

282. In this process of formation, we let ourselves be transformed by Christ, even as we develop "the habit of doing good, which also is a part of our examination of conscience. We do not simply identify sins, but also recognize God's work in our daily lives, in the events of our personal history and the world around us, and in the witness of all those men and women who have gone before us or accompany us with their wisdom. This helps us to grow in the virtue of prudence and to give an overall direction to our life through concrete choices, in the serene awareness of both our gifts and our limitations". (*Pope Francis, Christus Vivit*)

246. [On being a mentor to young people] The same young people described to us the qualities they hope to find in a mentor, and they expressed this with much clarity... "Mentors should not lead young people as passive followers, but walk alongside them, allowing them to be active participants in the journey. They should respect the freedom that comes with a young person's process of discernment and equip them with tools to do so well. A mentor should believe wholeheartedly in a young person's ability to participate in the life of the Church. A mentor should therefore nurture the seeds of faith in young people, without expecting to immediately see the fruits of the work of the Holy Spirit." (*Pope Francis, Christus Vivit*)

260. [On marriage and human sexuality] I like to think that "two Christians who marry have recognized the call of the Lord in their own love story, the vocation to form one flesh and one life from two, male and female. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony envelops this love in the grace of God; it roots it in God himself. By this gift, and by the certainty of this call, you can go forward with assurance; you have nothing to fear; you can face everything together!"

261. Here, we need to remember that God created us as sexual beings. He himself “created sexuality, which is a marvelous gift to his creatures”. Within the vocation to marriage we should acknowledge and appreciate that “sexuality, sex, is a gift from God. It is not taboo. It is a gift from God, a gift the Lord gives us. It has two purposes: to love and to generate life. It is passion, passionate love. True love is passionate. Love between a man and a woman, when it is passionate, always leads to giving life. Always. To give life with body and soul”.

265. Marriage requires preparation, and this calls for growing in self-knowledge, developing the greater virtues, particularly love, patience, openness to dialogue and helping others. It also involves maturing in your own sexuality, so that it can become less and less a means of using others, and increasingly a capacity to entrust yourself fully to another person in an exclusive and generous way. (Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*)

170. [On the gift of a child and the love of parents] Expectant mothers need to ask God for the wisdom fully to know their children and to accept them as they are. Some parents feel that their child is not coming at the best time. They should ask the Lord to heal and strengthen them to accept their child fully and wholeheartedly. It is important for that child to feel wanted. He or she is not an accessory or a solution to some personal need. A child is a human being of immense worth and may never be used for one’s own benefit. So it matters little whether this new life is convenient for you, whether it has features that please you, or whether it fits into your plans and aspirations. For “children are a gift. Each one is unique and irreplaceable... We love our children because they are children, not because they are beautiful, or look or think as we do, or embody our dreams. We love them because they are children. A child is a child”. The love of parents is the means by which God our Father shows his own love. He awaits the birth of each child, accepts that child unconditionally, and welcomes him or her freely. (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*)

Session Outline

- Welcome, sign-in, and opening prayer (5 minutes)
- The “Guess My Mood” game (10 minutes)
- Reflection and discussion on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit (20 minutes)
- Respect for the dignity of human life (10 minutes)
- Responding with faith to vulnerable human life (9 minutes)
- Closing prayer and song (6 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Photocopied handouts for each young person
- Prizes (i.e. a snack) for the winning team members in the opening game
- A watch or phone to use as a timer
- Pencils or pens for writing
- Audio/visual equipment for the closing song (if available)

Junior High – Respect Life Sunday Catechetical Session

Welcome, sign-in, and opening prayer (5 minutes)

1. Welcome and sign-in

[Take a few moments to welcome the young people as they arrive and have them sign in or check their name on the roll sheet, if applicable.]

2. Opening prayer

[Now invite the young people to stand and join together in prayer, in the following or similar words.]

Leader: Sisters and brothers, let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God, as we begin our session in prayer... [Make the sign of the cross] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Now everyone repeat after me... [The young people repeat, one line at a time.]

Heavenly Father,
I offer you this day
All that I do and think and say,
Uniting it with what was done
By Jesus Christ, your only Son.

Jesus, shine through me
And be so in me
That every person I meet
May feel your presence
In my soul.
Amen.

3. Sharing and caring – reflection and intercessory prayers

Leader: Brothers and sisters, we are going to continue our prayer, but I want you to sit down for this part. [Wait a few seconds for the children to take their seats.] Close your eyes and take a deep breath... Now let it out... Take another deep breath... And let it out.

Leader: I want you to remember some of the things that happened in the last week. Maybe at home, maybe at school, maybe with your friends. Think about a moment you

shared with someone that made you feel joyful or peaceful... or a moment in which someone treated you with kindness, generosity, or gentleness [Wait a few seconds.] Let's give thanks to God for the people who bring the light of Christ into our lives. As we go around the room, I want each of you to say the name of the person you have in your heart, nice and loud so we can all hear. When everyone has finished, we will all respond by saying: "Dear Jesus, thank you for filling their hearts with your love."

[Go around the room and give each young person a chance to say someone's name. If they feel shy, just let them know it's okay, and go on to the next person.]

Leader: Repeat after me—Dear Jesus, thank you for filling their hearts with your love!

All: Dear Jesus, thank you for filling their hearts with your love!

Leader: Thank you all for lifting up our brothers and sisters in prayer! We know that God our Father loves us all more than we could ever imagine, and our Mother Mary also loves us as her own children. So, let's finish up our prayer by asking our mother in heaven to pray for all of us:

All: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women

and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Leader: [Make the sign of the cross] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

The "Guess My Mood" game (10 minutes)

[The purpose of this "ice breaker" game is to engage the young people in a fun activity that also prepares them for a spiritual conversation about making good choices, grounded in the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Here are the steps in the game:

1. Pass out **Handout #1** and ask the young people to follow the instructions on the page, but not to let anyone else see their answers. It should take no more than 2 minutes to fill out the page.
2. Have them fold their paper so no one can see it. Then organize them into teams of 4 or 5 young people.

3. Explain that each team will send one member to the front of the room, and that person will announce what word they chose to symbolize their mood. After that, each team will try to guess which mood the word represents, starting with the team from which the young person came. Each team can only offer one answer at a time. If they guess incorrectly, the next team has a chance to guess, and so on until the correct mood is guessed. At that point, the person in front explains the connection between their word and the mood that it represents. The team that guessed correctly earns one point, and then someone from the next team goes to the front and the process is repeated.
4. Set a timer for 6 minutes and explain that whichever team has the most points when the time runs out will be the winner, so the faster they guess, the more people will have a chance to play.
5. The process described in step 3 is repeated until the timer beeps. Whichever team has the most points when time runs out is the winner. Be sure to give the winning team members a prize.]

Reflection and discussion on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit (20 minutes)

[The objective of this activity is to help the young people recognize that their moods and emotions can affect the decisions they make in life, and not always for the better. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are similar to moods, but as we grow in Christian maturity, they become more stable and always serve to help us make the best possible decisions in difficult situations.]

1. Intro – discussion about moods and decision-making (3 minutes)

[Transition from the game activity by explaining that in life, our moods and emotions can have a big influence on our behavior and our decisions. Give an example or two from your own experience, such as the difference between interactions with family members when peaceful vs. stressed, angry vs. cheerful, bored vs. excited. Then invite the young people to quietly think of an example of their own.]

2. Second Reading for Respect Life Sunday – 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14 (3 minutes)

[Pass out **Handout #2** and tell the young people that the reading at the top of the page is the second reading for Sunday, October 2 this year. Invite a volunteer to prayerfully read the reading at the top of the page aloud, while everyone else listens. Then offer an explanation in the following or similar words.]

Leader: This reading reminds us that as Christians, we always have God by our side, no matter how bad things might seem in our lives. That means we have no reason to be fearful or cowardly about anything, but especially when it comes to doing the right thing and helping others to do the same. At the end of the reading, we are told to guard and treasure everything we have learned from Jesus Christ, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

But how do we know when we are being helped by the Holy Spirit, and not being tempted by the evil one or a spirit of evil? That’s where the spirit of “power and love and self-control” comes in, as we just heard in the reading. In the letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians (Gal 5:22-23), there are several more qualities that he lists as signs that

the Holy Spirit is guiding us. We call these the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, and there are twelve, which are listed for you in the handout.

3. Describe the twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit (12 minutes)

[Invite the young people to join together in pairs or groups of three, forming no more than 12 groups. Go through the list of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit and assign one to each pair or group. Do not leave anyone without a partner, even if that means there are fewer than 12 groups—any remaining Fruits can be addressed with the whole class at the end. Then do the following tasks:

- a. Give each group 2 minutes to think about the Fruit they were assigned and come up with a short description of what they think it means. If they have no idea, ask them to give their best guess, based on what it sounds like it might mean.
- b. Have someone from each group read the description they came up with. Then take a few seconds to add or correct their ideas, and thank them for the effort. Each Fruit could be the basis for a whole class, but now is not the time to go deep, so move through the list quickly.
- c. If there are any Fruits remaining, offer your own description to round out the definitions.

Note: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not provide a detailed description of the 12 Fruits, beyond simply naming them. A dictionary could help in defining them, or you may want to do your own research on Catholic websites. The following descriptions can serve as a starting point:

- **Charity:** For Christians, *charity* is another way of saying *love*, meaning the kind of love that expresses itself in acts of sacrificial service, following the example of Jesus. This is the first Fruit of the Holy Spirit because the first letter of Saint John tells us that God *IS* love.
- **Joy:** At its foundation, joy flows from the realization that God has given everything for us and for our salvation. When we are centered on God, we also find joy in prayer, in relationships with others in the community, and in joining with them to do good and care for others.
- **Peace:** There is a tranquility in our soul that comes from reliance and trust in God. Nothing can greatly bother us when we know that our eternal destiny is safe in God's loving hands, and prayer/worship help us to remain centered in that peace of Christ.
- **Patience:** Love is always patient, as 1 Cor 13:4 tells us. The Holy Spirit helps us to bear with the annoyances and failings of others, just as God bears with us whenever we fall short. This awareness also helps us to patiently resist the temptations we are prone to in our own lives.
- **Kindness:** 1 Cor 13:4 also tells us that love is kind, sometimes referred to as *benignity*. It means a willingness to do more for others than they do for you, without counting the cost, and always treating people according to their dignity as children of God, no matter what they have done.
- **Goodness:** Goodness consists not only in avoiding sin and evil, but also in doing what is right, in charity and kindness. True goodness does not make a show or boast of good deeds, but it does so quietly, so that only God and the beneficiaries of our goodness can see what we have done.
- **Generosity:** Generosity means freely sharing with others the blessings we have received from God. It also means having a generous spirit in dealing with the failings of others without being excessively critical or imposing burdens. In the latter sense, it is sometimes called *longanimity*.
- **Gentleness:** Gentleness flows from our experience of being forgiven by God, which allows us to transmit the same tenderness to others, instead of repaying their transgressions and offenses with vengeance, condemnation, and roughness. It is sometimes also called *mildness*.

- **Faithfulness:** Above all, faithfulness means striving to live according to God’s will, as shown in the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. It also means fulfilling the commitments we have made to those we are called to serve, whether in our families, at work/school, or in the community.
- **Modesty:** There are two main aspects to modesty. Internal modesty is a form of humility, whereby we acknowledge our giftedness and the things we have done well by giving thanks to God who has made us. External modesty means covering our bodies with dignified clothing to avoid leading others to sinful thoughts, as well as avoiding boastfulness in speech or demeanor.
- **Self-control:** We are called to moderation and self-control in all things, especially with regard to behaviors such as eating, drinking, sexual behavior, sleeping, and having fun. It is sometimes also called *continence*, and it is developed in practices such as fasting and abstinence.
- **Chastity:** Chastity indicates the proper ordering of physical and sexual desires to their purpose in marriage and family life. For the unmarried or consecrated religious, it means abstinence from sexual behavior, while for those who are married, it means faithfulness to one’s spouse.]

4. Focusing on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit to make good decisions (2 minutes)

[Wrap up this activity by explaining to the young people that their moods and emotions can affect the decisions they make in life, and not always for the better. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are similar to moods, but as we grow in Christian maturity, they become more stable and always serve to help us make the best possible decisions in life, even in difficult situations. So, whenever we have to make a decision and are not sure what to do, we should take a moment to ask ourselves: *what choice can I make that will best reflect the Fruits of the Holy Spirit in my life?*]

Respect for the dignity of human life (10 minutes)

1. Respect Life Month and the principles of respect for human life (2 minutes)

[Explain to the young people that the month of October is Respect Life Month. This is a time each year that the Church reflects on the right to life as the most fundamental right, on which all other human rights are based. Every culture and every religion has developed some protections for human life, some stronger than others.

Surprisingly often, whether society permits it or not, people are faced with a temptation to take a life—either their own or someone else’s. Reason tells us that innocent human life should never be taken deliberately and intentionally. No one has a fundamental right to end my life, and we should always treat others at least as well as we would like to be treated. It is also a grave sin against the Fifth Commandment to kill someone without just cause: “Thou shalt not kill.” Violating this commandment puts in jeopardy our friendship with God; without repentance and reconciliation, we would not be able to enjoy eternal happiness with God in Heaven when we die. Now begin a discussion as follows:]

2. Situations in which people may be tempted to kill others (5 minutes)

Leader: Think about this for a second and tell me: When might someone be tempted to kill another human being or recklessly endanger someone in ordinary life?

[Some answers may come quickly, such as abortion and suicide. Others may need some prompts or hints, such as “how about in a car?” (driving too fast or while under the influence) or “what might happen when people are bullied?” (school shootings or revenge killings). Other instances could be: hate crimes (randomly targeting people for their race, religion, politics, or sexual identity), participating in armed criminal activity or criminal gangs. Some may also mention a just cause, such as self-defense, as a soldier in war, or as a peace officer. Acknowledge that there can be exceptions for a just cause, especially for people whose job it is to protect others against lethal threats, but now is not the time for a deep explanation of just war theory or the limits on the right to self-protection.]

3. Contributing factors and Spirit-filled remedies (3 minutes)

Leader: Now think about the mindset of people who intentionally choose to end their own or someone else’s life. What kinds of feelings do you think are driving them to act?

[Allow a few young people to respond. Perhaps suggest a few situations: What about when having an abortion? What about suicide? What about a school shooting? What about drunk driving?]

Leader: Of all those feelings we just named, which ones are Fruits of the Holy Spirit? Look again at your **Handout #2**. [Probably there are not any.] On the other hand, can you see any Fruits of the Spirit that might have helped to avoid killing someone? What are they?

[Allow the young people to name a few Fruits of the Holy Spirit that apply.]

Leader: That’s right. [If they do not mention peace, kindness, goodness, or self-control, you may want to briefly highlight those. Chastity is especially pertinent regarding abortion, because it can help prevent people from having an unexpected pregnancy in the first place.] So let us always pray to grow in the Fruits of the Holy Spirit so that our every action may reflect God’s love for the dignity of human life.

Responding with faith to vulnerable human life (9 minutes)

1. Helping others make good decisions too (2 minutes)

[Pass out **Handout #3**. It is not necessary to read the whole quote from Pope Francis. The young people can do that on their own if they want to see the full context of his statement. Just draw their attention to the boldface sentence in the second paragraph. Invite someone to read that sentence, then comment on it with the following or similar words:]

Leader: Pope Francis is right. Facing an unexpected or difficult pregnancy can be overwhelming and even terrifying. Even if we ourselves never experience it, we need to be prepared when someone we know and love is in that situation, because it is far more common than most people realize. As followers of Jesus, our mission in that moment is to love them both—the mother and the baby in her womb. We can help her to see that

taking a human life is never the answer to a problem. Part of the right answer is found in the Gospel reading for this Sunday.

2. With faith, the seemingly impossible becomes possible (3 minutes)

[Invite one of the young people to read the Gospel passage out loud for the class from **Handout #3.**]

Leader: The mustard seed is really tiny... But when it is planted, it actually becomes the biggest bush, so that even the birds of the air make their nests in it! Jesus says that is how our faith is... It might start very small, but it grows and grows, until things that seem impossible suddenly become possible. When someone we know is in a very dark place and cannot see any hope for her pregnancy, sometimes it is the light of **our** faith that can help her see a way forward, centered on love and justice and goodness, because faith casts out darkness and overcomes every fear and every regret.

3. Prayer and action on behalf of vulnerable human lives (4 minutes)

Leader: Beyond individual people and the decisions they make, there are threats to human life all around us. Most often, society passes laws to protect the vulnerable, like the laws we have against murder and drunk driving. But in some cases, the law does not protect life, like with abortion and the death penalty. In these instances, it is our mission as Catholic disciples of Jesus to pray and take action to improve or overturn unjust laws.

With that in mind, the Catholic bishops in CA have joined together this year to ask everyone to pray, fast, and vote for the defeat of Prop 1. Prop 1 would allow abortions for any reason right up to the moment of birth. Of all the countries in the world, only two have intentionally implemented such an extreme policy of abortion without limits.*

You and your family can join the Novena prayer to Defeat Prop 1 by visiting the website listed at the bottom of **Handout #3**, and you can also go there to find more reasons why Prop 1 is a bad law. Please take the time to share that information with your family this week and encourage them to pray and vote against Prop 1! The next time we meet, you can tell me how it went for you.

[Check with your Parish Catechetical Leader or Director of Faith Formation to find out what the parish or school is doing for Respect Life Month. Maybe it is a fundraiser, maybe it is a “Parish Baby Shower” to collect items for the local Pregnancy Resource Center, or something else. If the families of children in faith formation will be involved, then mention it here in these or similar words.]

* See <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/>. Only China and Vietnam chose to allow unlimited abortions. South Korea recently joined them when a judge declared that their then-current law restricting abortion was unconstitutional. Until a new law is passed, there are no legal limits there either.

Leader: Now think about what Pope Francis said again: “**we have done little to adequately accompany women in very difficult situations.**” That is very true about our society as a whole, but as Catholics, we are working every day to do something about that. In fact, through our Baptism, we were born ready to answer the call for help. For Respect Life Month, our parish is inviting our class to help women and families in need as follows:

[Explain what activities the parish or school will be doing and how the children and their families can participate. If the families will be asked to bring something or do something, there should be a note sent to the parents about that. Always be sure to give various options, in case a family does not have the means to contribute an item or make a financial contribution. Even something as simple as offering a prayer as a family can be of great spiritual value.]

Leader: As you can see, prayer and action are two important ways to live our faith, like two sides of the same coin. Even if our faith is the size of a mustard seed, that spark of faith can be the light that transforms the darkest and scariest situations into signs of hope and love. The secret is that faith does not just mean waiting for God to make a miracle—it is the discovery that **you** are God’s miracle, that we are **all** God’s miracle, and the things we do, whether alone or together, will make the impossible become possible.

Closing prayer and song (6 minutes)

1. Brief discussion about the *Our Father*

[The session ends with a recitation of the *Our Father* followed by *All of You* from the soundtrack of *Encanto*. Before reciting the *Our Father*, **take a moment to have a brief discussion with the young people about the lines: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.”** Ask them: what do these lines mean? After a few responses, explain that it has to do with us asking God to help us take care of each other with loving kindness, and by engaging in prayer and action for justice and the common good. In other words, we are asking God to help us grow and live in the Fruits of the Spirit to do everything we talked about today. Tell them to remember that every time we pray the *Our Father*.]

2. Recitation of the *Our Father*

Leader: Let’s all stand now, as we pray: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

All: Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

[Make the sign of the cross] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

3. Sing together *All of You* from the soundtrack of *Encanto*

[Many of the young people are probably already familiar with this song. Encourage them to sing along if they know the words. A digital recording of this song can be purchased online, but it would be ideal if you could project the song from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrMxx8EV4JU>]

Handout #1 – Guess My Mood Game

1. Think about the moods you have experienced over the last week... Pick one from the following list and circle it:

Angry	Gloomy	Playful
Appreciated	Hopeful	Regretful
Bored	Jealous	Relieved
Cheerful	Lazy	Resentful
Confused	Lonely	Stressed
Discouraged	Motivated	Thankful
Embarrassed	Panicked	Threatened
Excited	Peaceful	Worried

2. Now pick a word that captures that mood for you, with two requirements:
- The word has to be a thing, not an adjective (i.e. a specific plant, animal, food... no proper names of people or places are allowed)
 - It cannot be random—there must be a meaningful connection between the word and the mood it represents for you, but obscure connections are allowed! 😊

Your word: _____

3. Explain why your chosen word symbolizes the mood you were in:

Handout #2 – The Fruits of the Holy Spirit

A Reading from the Second Letter to Timothy.

(2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14)

Beloved:

I remind you, to stir into flame
the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.
For God did not give us a **spirit** of cowardice
but rather **of power and love and self-control.**

So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord,
nor of me, a prisoner for his sake;
but bear your share of hardship for the gospel
with the strength that comes from God.

Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me,
in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

**Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit
that dwells within us.**

The Word of the Lord

What are the Fruits of the Holy Spirit?[†]

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are **charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity** (See Galatians 5:22-23).

In the “Fruits of the Holy Spirit” the world can see what becomes of people who let themselves be adopted, led, and completely formed by God. The Fruits of the Holy Spirit show that God really plays a role in the life of Christians.

Application to real life: Whenever you are faced with a decision—whether big or small—take a moment to ask yourself: what choice can I make that will best reflect the Fruits of the Holy Spirit in my life?

[†] From *YouCat* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), n. 311.

Handout #3 – Responding with Faith to Vulnerable Human Life

Pope Francis said this about abortion:

Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us... Yet this defense of unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right. It involves the conviction that **a human being is always sacred and inviolable**, in any situation and at every stage of development. Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems.

I want to be completely honest in this regard. This is not something subject to alleged reforms or “modernizations”. It is not “progressive” to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life. **On the other hand, it is also true that we have done little to adequately accompany women in very difficult situations, where abortion appears as a quick solution to their profound anguish...** Who can remain unmoved before such painful situations? (*Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 213-214)

Gospel Reading for Respect Life Sunday:



A Reading from the Gospel of St. Luke:

The apostles said to the Lord,

“Increase our faith.”

The Lord replied,

“If you have faith the size

of a mustard seed,

you would say to this mulberry tree,

‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’

and it would obey you.”

The Gospel of the Lord. (Luke 17:5-6)

Homework: In 2022, Catholics are uniting in prayer and fasting to defeat Prop 1, and to provide life-affirming support to women, children, and families in need. Join the Novena from September 29 to October 7 (www.CACatholic.org/Prop1) and have your family take part in our parish/school activities for Respect Life Month!

‡ Royalty-free image by Maximo Cerezo Barredo. See <https://www.servicioskoinonia.org/cerezo/>.